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ABSTRACT

By 1966, requests made to the Pennsylvania regional film library far exceeded the center's capacity to deliver. Hiring additional media specialists and technicians and computerizing the request procedure served only to multiply the number of requests. A federally-assisted statewide program provided for a central agency to convert older media materials to videotapes and for central purchasing and distribution of hardware, video equipment, and additional videotapes. This placed nearly 1000 film titles at the disposal of each of the participating schools. (EMH)

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MULTIPLY & CONQUER *(Duplication of 16mm educational prints onto videocassettes for purposes of 100% accessibility in every classroom.)*

Wayne E. Goss

I do appreciate very much the opportunity to make this presentation to this group of professional persons - a group with so much in common in both goals and problems. It was a problem confronting us in northwestern Pennsylvania that led us to the solution responsible for my presence here today.

Before getting into our video program I must give you some pertinent background information - information so necessary to the full understanding and appreciation of our current situation.

Our regional film library and materials center was one of the last three to be established in Pennsylvania -- this was in late 1966. As was typical of most such centers we tried to build a library and continue to grow and operate on a ridiculous assessment of one dollar to 1.25 per pupil per year. By the end of three years we had about 2,700 prints or a print-pupil ratio of 1 to 15 which according to some authorities should have been adequate to do a good job for our 17 districts. Please note - I said "should have".

At this same time it was also very evident that if media was to have an impact in our area it would be necessary that professional media persons would be needed at the district level.

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We immediately began writing a proposal for funding under the Educational Professions Development Act for sufficient money to train some people as Media Specialists. The proposal was approved and funded.

Recruits for this program were sought from our districts in the Intermediate Unit. The district had one major responsibility - upon completion of the 12 month program the District would make every effort to place this individual in a position of full-time media specialists upon his return to work the following September.

Federal funding was for two years during which time 20 people were trained and each graduated from Clarion State College with a Masters Degree in Communication and Pennsylvania State Certification as a Media Specialist.

Nearly every district upheld its obligation and today we have one of the highest number of trained, certified, district media people found anywhere in Pennsylvania.

During this same period we did two other things that had bearing upon our decision to go to the video route. First, we hired two good electronic technicians and established a very good electronic repair shop for maintenance of all media hardware in the schools of the

Intermediate Unit. Second, we programmed our total materials holdings into the Computer on Clarion State College Campus and began booking scheduling all our material on Computer. This was necessary to give us the management information we needed to get the maximum distribution and utilization out of every item we owned.

Prior to booking by Computer we had been using a visible file type card system. From such incomplete and often inaccurate records we had for about three years determined that we had been satisfying about 74% of all requests coming into us. It was difficult for us to swallow all the complaints and criticisms we had been getting for months from teachers, administrators and even board members. We had felt that anyone getting 3 out of every 4 items requested shouldn't really have too much complaint to anyone.

WE HAD BEEN FLYING BLIND!

After three semesters of computer booking the real truth hit us rather forcefully when a series of print-outs proved to us that we were filling only 50% of our requests.

Progress had back-fired on us!!

The technicians we had hired were now keeping all projection equipment in every district in good operating order - the Media

Specialists in the districts were conducting local workshops in the use of film and other media. The results - our requests for film far outstripped the capacity of our good but average sized library.

We Had A Problem - and something had to be done and done in a hurry. We had been considering going video for several months. We had not given serious planning time to the conversion because we had been hoping that maybe the problem was either not too serious or perhaps would even go away. Now we knew the facts and they had to be acknowledged. We also knew that from somewhere we had to find at least a half million dollars - either to strengthen the film library or convert to video.

In December, 1973 at a meeting of I.M.S. Directors at the Department of Education we were informed of the release of impounded federal money to support NDEA for fiscal 1973 and 1974 and possibly 1975. The state plan for distributing Pennsylvania's share was like this - for approved proposals:

To each district $10,000 - $5,000 Federal - $5,000 Local

To each I. U. $20,000 - $10,000 Federal - $10,000 Local

This was to hold for each of the three fiscal years.

A very, very quick mental calculation immediately said - "MY GOD, THERE'S THE HALF MILLION WE NEED!"

We now had the NEED or the PROBLEM - We had an idea of how to correct our problem - and NOW, like manna from Heaven we may even have the money.

Keep in mind a few things before going further:

1. We were working with 17 independent districts - each of which would have to oommit its NDEA entitlement to our proposal for the next 3 years PLUS committing matching dollars for the same time
2. The entitlement would not even be available unless the entire idea were given approval by the state department of education
3. The idea of one Master proposal and 17 "piggy-back" proposals had to be given special consideration and approval at the state level.

We were still a few weeks away from being able to gather the so-called "manna" for our program!

Between December 14 and January 9 we roughed out our proposal as/to what we would do if the districts would agree. On January 10 at a special meeting of all 17 district Superintendents this was what we offered:

In exchange for your committment of your NDEA dollars to the proposal this is what we can and will do for you -

a. We will write the Master Proposal and the sub-proposals specifically geared to your districts needs

b. Since all the money will not be immediately available we suggest that 40% of the 1st year entitlement ($8,000.) be earmarked for video tape - while the balance should be used for hardware including VTR's, Video Playback units, 25" Color Receivers/Monitors and steel television stands. We will buy the tape in large quantity under state contract prices; further, we will write the specifications and advertise for bids for all hardware. You submit your own Purchase Orders to the vendors and pay your own invoices.

c. We will instruct your personnel on the use of the new hardware

d. We will school our technicians and continue to maintain this new video hardware as we have done in the past with your other media equipment

e. We will provide you with loaner equipment in case of break-down with hardware you purchase

f. We will continue to acquire new titles with rights so you may add to your cassette holdings as you see fit

g. And finally, we will put into your district on 3/4" video cassette by September 1,000 of the most popular titles, equally divided between Elementary and Secondary and covering the curriculum. These and all the hardware you buy will belong to your district.

Instant and unanimous support and approval was given by the Superintendents.

In rapid succession a number of things had to be done and were done because we had now committed ourselves - there was no direction to go except straight toward our September goal.

The Master proposal and all piggy-back proposals were written and submitted to Harrisburg just two days before the March 15 deadline.

Meetings with District boards were attended to explain the whole change-over to them in hopes of getting their approval and financial support.

Sessions with district media personnel and district librarians were necessary.

Hardware was ordered in on a "look-see" basis to give us a chance to try some of the 3/4" U-Matic models on the market; receivers/ monitors were given a long, hard look because we were needing something for classroom use and abuse. Our technicians were most valuable in this phase giving us their expert opinions on the merits and demerits of each piece that was in on trial.

Of highest priority were meetings with film production representatives in an effort to get duplication rights to titles on the most wanted list. In most cases this individual was a Vice-President in charge of Marketing - certainly someone in a decision making capacity.

This was an experience that was new and experimental both to us and the film production people because there had been no history of anyone doing quite what we were attempting. After an explanation of our proposal this was the usual approach to these people - "we would like to make up to 20 video copies of given titles that we now own or expect to buy. What will it cost us? " Surprisingly, after the first signs of shock disappeared we were able in nearly every situation to work out suitable fees that were satisfactory to the film people and which we felt we could afford - not just for a year or two but on a continuing basis.

I am most pleased to say that the film people were excellent in the initial negotiations; furthermore, in the past year we have had offered to us voluntarily many additional agreements from still more film productio people. Being totally honest and firm in our convictions and being willing to pay a fair price for our benefits helped us in our efforts to solve what might have been an insurmountable road-block.

With the approval of all the proposals at the State Department of Education the real work of putting all the pieces together now began in earnest.

It was already early May. Working closely with the agreed upon commercial duping house to do the fifteen copies of each cassette generated selection of titles was quickly managed. All material to go on a given KC-60 cassette was spliced onto a single two-thousand foot reel. The titles were all of the same grade level and in the same subject area. As many as 6 ten-minute films were put on a reel for later transfer to an equally long tape. The "ganging" of the several titles per reel of tape was necessary to keep overhead to a minimum and enable us to place that 1,000 title library in every district with the money we had.

Hardware was agreed upon - specs were written, bids were advertised and deliveries were forthcoming in a matter of about six to eight weeks.

By the first week in June delivery was made to us of the first batch of duped cassettes - the quality in every case was excellent. From this day to the September deadline it was all down-hill. The hectic work schedule continued for as we prepared new groups of titles on the big reels to go to Pittsburgh, we were getting returned from the duping house not only the newly taped cassettes but also the original reels of film. These had to be undone, inspected, placed in the proper film can and returned to the proper space on the film racks. Along with these extra duties the entire staff was still responsible for continuing their normal, day-to-day chores of operating the materials center, repairing equipment for 17 districts, doing 60% of all printing needs for these districts, and maintaining a cooperative purchasing service for the districts of the Intermediate Unit. There are only 11 persons on that staff.

By the 2nd week in September we had delivered to each of our participating districts (14) a videocassette library of 254 3/4" cassettes most of which were one hour in length and holding about 960 film titles.

We missed our original target by one week and forty titles.

From September of '74 to date this is what has happened:

a. Our library of master tapes has grown to nearly 1,500 - most of which have been generated on our own film chain — from new titles bought under one of our duplicating agreements

b. we have duped thousands of additional titles for our districts from our own masters - districts are now customizing according to local need.

c. additional hardware has been bought by every district to strengthen the program locally

d. film requests have dropped off by 70% from the level of three years ago

e. utilization of these materials especially at the secondary level, has jumped 300% of the level of three years ago

f. administrators, teachers, students and board members are sold on and most happy with the entire program - the rumblings from the hinterlands have totally ceased.

What about tomorrow? ? ?

We are confident that the direction we took and the format we chose were the proper ones.

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We firmly believe that in our area the 3/4" cassette and related hardware will be around for a long time.

We are confident we will continue to be able to renew duplication agreements without much trouble.

We firmly believe that within the year some statewide duplication permission will have been negotiated and accomplished by our own Bureau of Media Services in the Department of Education.

It has been a long haul but we are certain our efforts were worthwhile because the kids in our several counties have been the real beneficiaries.